

pany our Lord in his ministry, and had divided with him the attention and interest of his disciples, counteracting, of course, as far as his efforts were successful, the doctrine and spirit of the Teacher from heaven.*

The few observations which the subject may require to be made on ancient literature, will be directed to the part of it most immediately descriptive of what may be called human reality, representing character, sentiment, and action. For it will be allowed, that the purely speculative part of that literature has in a great measure ceased to interfere with the intellectual discipline of modern times. It obtains too little attention, and too little deference, to contribute materially to the formation of the mental habits, which are adverse to the Christian doctrines and spirit. Divers learned and fanatical devotees to antiquity and paganism, have indeed made some effort to recall the long departed veneration for the dreams and subtleties of ancient philosophy. But they might with as good a prospect of success recommend the building of temples or a pantheon, and the revival of the institutions of idolatrous worship. The greater number of intelligent, and even learned men, would feel but little regret in consigning the largest proportion of that philosophy to oblivion ; unless they may be supposed to like it as heathenism more than they admire it as wisdom; or unless their pride would wish to retain a reminiscence of it for contrast to their own more rational philosophizing.

* It is however no part of my object in these letters to remark on the influence, in modern times, of the fabulous religion that infested the ancient works of genius. That influence is at the present time, I should think, extremely small, from the fables being so stale : all readers are sufficiently tired of Jupiter, Apollo, Minerva, and the rest. As long however as they could be of the smallest service, they were piously retained by the Christian poets of this and other countries, who are now under the necessity of seeking out for some other mythology, the northern or the eastern, to support the languishing spirit of poetry. Even the ugly pieces of wood, worshipped in the South Sea Islands, will probably at last receive names that may more commodiously hitch into verse, and be invoked to adorn and sanctify the belles lettres of the next century. The Mexican abominations and infernalities have already received from us their epic tribute. The poet has no reason to fear that the supply of gods may fail; it is at the same time a pity, one thinks, that a creature so immense should have been placed in a world so small as this, where all nature, all history, all morals, all true religion, and ^ the whole resources of innocent fiction, are too little to furnish materials enough for the wants and labours of his genins.